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"Where there is no vision the people perish"

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THE POETRY REVIEW

Vol. XXXIII CONTENTS No. 1

	PAGE
Poems from H.Q., Capt. Alan Rook	9
The Tallest Son, Nicholas Moore ; *Heart's Desire*, Pauline Emeric	12
Invocation, Denis Clark ; *In Memoriam* : *A.N.C.W.*, T. J. M. Corsellis	13
Dusk, Staunton Calvert	15
What Matters, John D. Mortimer: *Bow in the Cloud*, Ruth Tenney.	16
Two Poems by Antoni Boguslawski, translated by Lewis Gielgud	17
Morning, Monica Pritchett	19
England Called, John T. Kirk	20
Widow by the Thames, Geraldine FitzGibbon	21
Cycling in the Mist, F. M. Queminet	22
The Road to Nonsense, Alan Rook	23
Michel, Philip Sylvester	26
Recent Poetry and Drama, Ranjee G. Shahani	27
O Let Us Not Dress Up, Vere Arnot	33
Vanishing, G. E. Mullins ; *When the Flowers Fade*, Derek B. Reade	34
John Waller and the Eight Oxford Poets, Nicholas Moore	35
Pervaneh, John Waller ; *An English Ballet*, Christmas Humpheys	40
Poetry and Prophecy, Dallas Kenmare	41
Chesterton should be living at this hour, Eva Dobell	50
A Northumbrian Poet, Edmund Casson	53
Dynamics of American Poetry, XCI, Alice Hunt Bartlett	57
A Review of Reviews, Cullen Jones	58
The Premium Editor's Report	61
A Miscellany : Christmas Humphries, L. M. Miller, Dorothy Trail, J.E.M., E. D. Bangay	62
A Royal Academy of Poetry, Arthur Row	67
Notes, Reports, Announcements	ii etc.
Verse Speaking Audition Notices	v

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FOR WAR TIME AND ALL TIME

6D — THE POCKET-BOOK of ENGLISH POETRY

A collection of poems that everyone should know.

"Good—very good." *The Star.*

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POEM FROM H.Q.

O RAIN that turns the shoddy streets of
summer, and the avenues of experience
to a mirror of our late desire,
and images the year's betrayal,

fall now on this uncovered dream and
let your rivulets reflect
some hope of purpose in our
death. For all our wishing

cannot deflect the course of this mad
season, nor control the rush
of strangers to the gate, nor turn
the wounded from the hospitals of thought.

This year, with a suddenness altogether
surprising, our weaning and coming-of-age
celebrations coincided. Now
the estate is ours, the litigations

of autumn and winter's jurists cannot
deny us. Whether we like it or not,
and most of us don't, the casual
fruition, the indifferent phrase

and gesture of the ugly, the long-neglected
vision of love which created only
a wider loneliness, all
in perpetuity ours.

Who now shall bid the soldier return to
his pastures : who tune his love to music
of the cicada, or lighten the burden
of the child sleeping on the doorstep

in the sun ? Who, in this summer season,
shall bid our memories search our childhood
for that lost dream, with all
its fascinating lack of detail,

and individual surprises, where Moses
was a lion, and the swine were continually rushing
with most joyous abandon
for our delight into the sea?

Dare we tell the policeman, walking
with Ella in the square down past the grocer's,
that his loins are already engaged
to the Inconsistent, that fatherhood

is on him before his time? Not even
war, which turns from the contemplation
of unreality to something
his mind can grasp, can unite

his lonely overtures to passion with
the inescapable journey through
the highways of love and history.
For what is lost to this

generation is the passionate withdrawal,
the consistent retreat to the desert, and what
has come is the participation
in the involuntary event.

O what to the living is music, except
sensation of sorrow: what to the swift
is thought, a rose in the desert:
what, when creation turns

to bite the hand that cherishes, is a rose?
For lonely and feeble the still insistent
urge to unite these present
unrealities to future

contemplation of expected events. Must death
the transformer, the migrant, the lonely sorrow,
lend to the carpenter
the craftsman's sedulous cunning?

Must the productive power of the human
function turn to the contemplation
of a few dry bones and a handful
of temporary, vain regrets ?

Must the narcissus ideal of society
founded on the rose, and the summer idyll,
lost now, alas, of a new
and fertile desert, where joy

is not a toy we snatch in the shadows
of the park, or between six and ten behind
a pub's closed doors,
but a vision so real that almost

you could squeeze it, so near that almost
the heart stops in anticipation of desire—
must all now turn to lonely
irrevocable ecstasy ?

No ! there can be to the vanquished no wish
for surrender ; for the landed fish no hope
of another spawning, The heart
that is failing knows that its days

of participation are over. Then let us
gladly, with the resolute courage of the broken,
not fondly, not idly, embrace
our future decision. For those

that erect this barrier to barbarism, found
a new Athens on the ashes of St. Paul's
can live not, nor hope to see
the columns of the Acropolis ; only

the ruins of their generation, and lovely the
heavens at nightfall and final the thunder.
Accept the accident of our time,
a modern, scientific miracle. ALAN ROOK.

THE TALLEST SON

THE tallest son fell from the heaviest tree,
The tallest and the heaviest, secretly.
He climbed up to the highest branch and fell,
Who knew the Arabian bird on heather hill—

Envied perhaps the bright spread of those wings,
And thought, as who has not since thought,
That he might follow where the other sprang.
O might have followed, but he followed not.

Because that bird—that pendent circumstance—
Flew from the flames a new and cherished thing,
Whereas the human played in lots of chance,
And drew, perhaps, geography all wrong.

Chance was not his, nor was the Arabian bird :
Though one tall feather in his neat hand clutched
Spoke of what he was after. How absurd
To climb for what not even poets have touched !

What now of all those jewelled and precious thoughts ?
They lie in dust beneath the smouldering pistol,
While wiser men, looking in heaven's crystal,
See what they cannot do, which he did not.

NICHOLAS MOORE.

HEART'S DESIRE

ACROSS a bridge I went,
Seeking the enchantment
Of a distant ground.
Yet what I found
Was not what I had seen through narrowed lids ;
But that which bids
Us leap from out the drowsy hour and sight,
Of colour and of light
Along the ways of heart's desire.
That which travels fast as fire
Leaving but ash upon its trace ;
That which has no abiding place. PAULINE EMERIC.

INVOCATION

POETS must die young !
Are they not whom the gods love ?
Are they not children of music, of wine and of light !
Forward to battle, then ! You, of all, spirit should prove
You who have led us to ecstasy, lead against night !

Poets must die young !
Full many have answered the call,
Whether, it might be, in boozer or brothel or fray
Poets are fighting men, Marlow was killed in a brawl
Better to die in quick combat than slowly decay

Poets must die young !
And many a poet has fought
Donne, Jonson, Byron, Sassoon, Sorley, Owen and Brooke,
When trumpets blare, titillating the battle steed's snort,
Better to ride with the rowdies than write in a book

Poets must die young !
Come out then each curly-haired pet
Auden and Isherwood, answer the call to the dance,
You whose ambiloquies tax everyone but your set,
Forward, my heroes, and let the gods have this last chance

R.A.F. DENIS CLARK

IN MEMORIAM: A.N.C.W.

I KNEW Nigel Weir
Slightly so
He stood upright and still
With an uncertain smile playing
Swaying, across his lips
Straight he stood as a poker
His neck ran into his head
And his chin was close to his throat.
When he spoke
His words came kindly, softly clear
Lisping but meticulously formed
Each syllable was of kindness.

I knew Nigel Weir
Sometimes he spoke to me
When I was scarcely nice to know
Spoke kindly and wisely
The man was polite—
Oh ugly word, polite—
Where others did not care.
He and I fenced each other
His was the greater grace
His foot was swifter sure
His hands knew more.

I knew Nigel Weir
Even saw his soul
In his few verses
More able and more lovely
Than my own wild words
He and I felt together
But he always excelled
In his feelings, his actions
And his pliant expression.

I read his poems
But only once I wondered
At Nigel Weir
Until I saw him
Moving among the Spitfires
Remembered his swift arms
And his sensitive eyes
And I pitied the German sons
And I pitied his troubled soul.

I knew Nigel Weir
And the strange contradiction
Of his coarse hard hands.
Heard he had won him a victim
Envied his arm and
Pitied his mind.
Then I took to the sky
And forgot the man Weir.

Periodically I saw his brother.

And he died
With the frustration
Of a ribbon for valour
Sewn on his chest,
Cruel mean joke,
This jeering compensation.
I remembered the words of another
Just as the flower of life seemed set to bloom,
And the sun had pierced a frigid sky,
You chose the solemn, unrelenting tomb
You chose to die.
I joined them to your name, Nigel—
Strange, that this should be the first time,
I've ever called you 'Nigel'—

I knew Nigel Weir
Vaguely so
He was always one step ahead of me
And he was of greater promise.
O world, it's Weir that's dead.

T. J. M. CORSELLIS
A.T.A. 2nd officer.

[S.O. Corsellis was killed on active service a few days after we received the above poignant tribute to another young poet, whose posthumous volume was reviewed in the November–December REVIEW: Ed.]

DUSK

NOW fancy has power to match the will's,
Lightly to mount a tall cloud's height

Or range the blue expanse of the night
That overflows the eastward hills.

Fair is the Moon—frail as a sigh—
Alone, aloft in the deepening sky.

Washington, D.C. STAUNTON CALVERT.

WHAT MATTERS

SOLITARY barking
Dog or fox,
I know not.

Distant cackling,
Geese it may be,
Care not I.

Care I only
The twilight breezes
Sing me your name.

From where you are
Comfort bring
The distant whistles
And the rumbling train :
I fear not
Though the silent road
Dips down into the
Darkness : I am loved
And my love is true.

R.A.F. Police JOHN D. MORTIMER.

BOW IN THE CLOUD

REMEMBRANCE of the Spirit in dark hour
Is like a jewel glimpsed within a well ;
Is like, upon parched pastures, sudden shower,
Too beautiful to sing ; too rare to tell ;
Is like a new-made verse to ancient song,
Whose melody is lost beyond the years ;
Sweet to the lips ; as honey to the tongue ;
Balm to the eyes ; as music to the ears ;
Is like a bow that, darting from a cloud,
Sends forth its shaft, the promised Word fulfilled ;
Is like new life that throbs beneath Death's shroud ;
Is like an answer to an asking child.
Remembrance of the Spirit in dark hour
Is Heaven's Seed wind-blown to earthly flower.

RUTH TENNEY.

Two poems by the well-known Polish poet, ANTONI BOGUSLAWSKI, *translated by Lewis Gielgud.*

GUINNESS IS GOOD FOR YOU

A NEAT Bar Parlour, with barmaids two.
One has freckles, and one red hair.
Two tall customers—both in blue—
And a sphinx-like cat in the easy chair.

The tall clock, striking, wheezes and whinnies.
The tall oak tables are stained on top.
The two tall customers sip their Guinness,
And lean on the counter, talking shop.

" Rotten weather," " Yes—Jerry won't stick it."
" They *will* lay eggs though, and hang the aim ! "
" Yes—but this unaimed bombing's not cricket."
" Jerry never could play the game ! "

If a bomb once falls on the neat little Bar—
What of the freckled barmaids then ?
They'll be digging for them where the ruins are—
And for what may be left of the tall young men !

But if Death doesn't call for his Guinness here,
Then it's " business as usual " tomorrow night. . .
" Freckles ! 'E takes us for 'eroines, dear !
Aint 'e a comic ! "
But isn't he right ?

MARYLEBONE SQUARE

THE day is turning fine.
Dear—tell me—have you ever seen
Box-trees in London look so green ?
And how the plane-leaves shine !

The sun still hides his face,
But on and over everything
A green delicious covering
Illuminates the place.

Do you remember, dear,
With what surprise it was you found
This garden was a burial-ground
And the grave-stones still here?

Jasmine and lilac bloom
In this sequestered spot, which yet
Recalls a London men forget
Where once the dead had room.

The Cemetery gate
Stands open now, and you could swear
There are no corpses resting there
Beneath the sward. But wait,

Wait. We will see the graves.
We will look close at the old stones
That stand above the dead men's bones.
That branch! See how it waves . . .

Look at the tall stone here!
No need to stoop to see the date.
Middle Victorian—or late:
Forbidding and austere.

"Here lies. . . ." The name's not clear—
John Rabbit's "true and loving wife". . .
When Mrs. Rabbit was in life
So was Lord Nelson, dear!

So round the old graveyard
We go, and gaze inquisitive—
And oh, the daisies are alive
And with the rain-drops starred!

Hearses will no more drive
The dead to this secluded place,
So thick the living swarm, they chase
Death off, that they may live.

Here, by a flower-bed,
One reads ; another's off to town.
Not here, not here, will men lay down
The next great air-raid's dead !

I do believe the rain
Has left a chilly feeling here . . .
We need not talk about it, dear,
But we will come again. ANTONI BOGUSLAWSKI.

MORNING

DO you remember the Autumn dawn
When tired with fear we heard
Nothing at last ? How free from noise
We spoke not a single word ?

A strange white daisy belonging to Day,
A pointed leaf with dew
Dripping upon the emerald earth
Touched us ; we never knew
Why in that deathly silent hour
We stayed at the open pane
Trembling with cold, and saw the morn
We had doubted to see again.

The wind brushed by, its early prick
Ran through our veins like wine :
The lingering terror fell away
Below the silver line
That threaded the limpid grey with blue,
The black with golden ore ;
Finger to lip the Day came forth,
Fairer than ever before.

The shivering air carried aloft
The siren's lonely cry ;
Together we stood and watched the dawn
Come cold and touch the sky.

MONICA PRITCHETT.

Man.

I FIND I cannot stay
Another day.
This soft and sleepy world
Is no part of my life,
Wife, if you want a child
To make your husband
Come and suffer.
I am the son
Of my country, now;
My mother's brother.
The papered foolish word
The radioed tall lie
Have twisted the shy
Youth you knew
A year ago
And given him a grip
On the mountain ledge
—Where a slip
Means death—and life
Exciting sings into his ear
That death is near.

Woman.

My husband lover, go.
It is so,
I know
My breasts ache for you
And my heart is torn.
Already we're apart.
I cannot reason;
The season
Has come and coloured the world
Flame red—I too am dead.

Man.

But the lurid glow
Lights the hovering sky
And shews the lie.
Look at the mountain now
The trees are trembling too

Nothing we can do
Will alter the pending storm

Woman.

The flame will die
When the rains come.
I can wait.
I'll be the washed reef
Your grief flows over
Be gone —and come again
Terrifically tried—
With those you died beside.

Trooper, R.A.C. JOHN T. KIRK.

WIDOW BY THE THAMES

HOW often, innocent from sleep,
We opened wide the door at morning
And saw the great white swans,
More than camelias glowing,
Curled on the river deep.

Lies now my love as he had lain
Asleep by me, straight nose,
Mouth curved in rare repose;
And as at other dawns
I seek the swans again:

Washed ashore on a weary tide,
Dun, logged with oil, some dead,
By this autumn's bloody Thames,
Inert as birds of lead,
Or stirring, sluggish-eyed.

And fit is this, and what should be,
For when the early stars, once loved,
Shine pale on ruins, dim on flames,
My love will not be moved,
And never wake to me.

GERALDINE FITZGIBBON.

CYCLING IN THE MIST

I FOLLOWED the white scored road
Where it wound on an ocean's floor,
With an ocean's walls on every side of me.

I watched white water parting
Before my advancing wheel,
And saw enwrapped in it the soft-blurred tree-weed.

Thick-stemmed was the weed,
Vanishing into the infinite-overhead :
Sinewy arms, groping endlessly for an unseen sky.

Sparrow-shoals, startled, swam up
From green uncertain hedge-coral,
Piping nervous sound-bubbles prettily.

Rooks down-dived with throbbing wings
To forage on the ocean's stubble-bed,
Where sheep-shellfish lay immune and motionless.

Multi-hued anemone.
Clustering round diluted house-rocks,
Caught still-mist like wine, in half-closed colour-cups ;

And wine-drenched gossamer, spread
In sagging layers on the grass-weed,
Caught thin light with the eastern walls.

I am yet under the sea :
Though, later, on the same scored road,
There was no single sign of ocean-bed—nor me.

Home Forces F. M. QUEMINET, Sgt.

THE ROAD TO NONSENSE

A bird's-eye criticism by Alan Rook

THE recent correspondence in Poetry Review on the subject of modern poetry has shown that there is still considerable misunderstanding of the aims of contemporary writers. This is unfortunate but hardly surprising, since contemporary writers themselves appear all too often uncertain of their own intentions.

Probably the chief adverse criticism levelled against the poetry of to-day is that it is difficult, obscure, even unintelligible, and it is the business of this article to determine how far this criticism is justified.

There are few who will not grant that the exact meaning of much modern writing is, in greater or less degree, obscure. Even those critics who profess to find no difficulty have given us such widely differing interpretations of well-known poems (as, for example, the "Waste Land") that the uninformed reader is left wondering whether it is in fact he who is the simpleton, or whether perhaps these critics may not have established unwittingly the very thesis they set out to disprove.

Obscurity in poetry is, of course, no new thing. The meaning of much of Shakespeare's poetry is obscure on first reading. But before we condemn this quality out of hand as clumsy and inefficient craftsmanship, it were well that we analysed the cause. For this obscurity of meaning has several roots.

It is, for example, very much easier for the ordinary man to talk about apples, than about truth. And it is usually easier for him to understand when someone else talks about apples than it is for him to follow a discourse on the Vitality of Love. When, therefore, we find a poem obscure, we should ask ourselves whether it is not rather the quality of the poet's thought which is the stumbling-block; the abstraction or the profundity of his argument which we are finding it difficult to follow. If it is so, then the fault lies with us rather than with the poet.

We are, in fact, most of us all too ready to blame the poet for our own deficiencies. Some poets make a far greater

demand on their readers than do others. Shelley's " Skylark " can be understood immediately by anyone, but the meaning of a large body of poetry, as, for example, much of the 17th century metaphysical writing, becomes clear only after careful study. This is not to say that Shelley is a better poet than Donne, but only that Donne demands of his reader (as he has a perfect right to do if he so choses) greater powers of attention, before the meaning of his poetry can be clearly grasped. There is, therefore, in poetry such as Donne's, room for obscurity, but it is an obscurity due, not to the incompetence of the poet, but rather to the laziness or ignorance or inattention of the reader, and an adverse criticism of difficulty or of obscurity directed against this type of writing is a criticism which goes home, not to the poet, but to the critic who levels it.

Poetry of this order has a meaning, and a meaning which can be understood, though sometimes only with difficulty. We are perfectly justified in applying to this poetry the descriptive terms " difficult " or " obscure " but we should not condemn it for being so. There is no reason why poetry shouldn't be obscure in this sense. Ease and difficulty are no criterions of excellence, and much poetry, from the very intensity and profundity of the thought-content, is bound to be difficult.

There is, however, poetry which is obscure because the poet has not expressed himself clearly, because his thought-process has been confused or incomplete, or because he has used symbols to the meaning of which the reader is given no clue, or a clue which is insufficient. No amount of sympathetic attention can solve this type of obscurity, and the critic must in these cases eventually decide that the poet has failed at his task of conveying his meaning to the reader. Much (but by no means so much as some critics would have us believe) of the poetry of to-day suffers from these faults, and we must pause to be very sure that we have exhausted our powers of attention and understanding before we condemn such writers as Blake, or T. S. Eliot as incompetent artists.

But, having said so much, we have, as it were, only

cleared the decks for the real action. We have (it is to be hoped) tidied up some of the loose thinking which is evident in contemporary criticism. There still remains the most important of all causes for present-day obscurity in writing.

We have hitherto considered the work of writers whose poetry has at least one quality in common, that it purposes to convey a meaning to the audience by some intelligible process of thought. There has, however, within living memory, arisen a school of writers who had no such intention. The aim of the French symbolists, and of English writers in their tradition, was to convey a *state* rather than an *idea*. No amount of attention or receptivity on the part of the reader will discover any meaning in those works of Ezra Pound or James Joyce which are written in this tradition. To condemn a poem by Mallarmé for being obscure is to ignore the fact that it is intentionally unintelligible.

There is, after all, no reason why poetry should have meaning. It can, for the sake of argument, be simple, sensuous, and passionate, *and* meaningless. A poet is not precluded by iron laws from attempting to convey anything other than *thought*, nor is he bound to prefer logic to suggestion. A critic of this poetry should first endeavour to comprehend the aim of the poet, and base his judgement on how far the poet has achieved this object.

Unfortunately a great deal of modern poetry, whilst largely influenced by this symbolical writing, has not adopted in their entirety the aims of the symbolists. It has, as it were, fallen between two stools, exploiting suggestion at the expense of meaning, and using association (all too often purely personal association in which the reader cannot share) to convey thought. So far as we can tell from the apparently logical structure, the retention of the rules of grammar and syntax, the passages of coherent argument, this poetry is meant to be understood by the mind of the reader. And yet, it can be very irritating, just as the reader is beginning to think that he understands what the writer is driving at, the poet, with inexplicable perversity, introduces associations which seem to be based

on personal accident, the significance of which no amount of imaginative consideration can comprehend, and the argument is lost. It is this failure on the part of the poet clearly to understand his own aims, leading inevitably to incoherence and confusion, which has, more perhaps than anything else, exhausted the patience of the poetry reading public, and obtained for all modern writing, whatever its aims, and whatever the degree of success with which these aims are achieved, a name for unintelligibility and incoherence from which it is only now just beginning to recover.

MICHEL

HE died in France, boy prisoner of war;
Slim son of France, and taking to his grave
A pride in France he never once forswore:
A pride that held his shoulders with the brave,
That stood beside his nineteen years to bear
Long days when hope ebbed out beyond the zone;
When through the blood-drawn starving heart would tear
Desires that stabbed remembrance to the bone:
His fields, his path—one leave, to go, just one,
Back to his mother, whom he had thought slow,
To Marie, who would never bear his son;
To work French earth with him to watch him grow,
Sunlight on limbs, bright hair, bright eyes, bright lips!
Over dead dreams a spade, unseeing, dips.

PHILIP SYLVESTER.

I congratulate THE POETRY REVIEW on the way it has continued to function under the most difficult circumstances. "The poetry of earth is never dead" and certainly THE POETRY REVIEW can claim a fair share in keeping it alive. I always look forward to its arrival with the keenest pleasure.

Chingford. W. R. LATHAM.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking you for the very interesting and helpful matter packed from cover to cover in THE POETRY REVIEW. For those seeking intimacy with the present day world of poetry it is invaluable and absorbing, and how much we need to turn to these things sometimes in our present chaos.

Haleswood. J. M. EASTCOTT.

RECENT POETRY AND DRAMA

IN literature, said Léon Chestov, we behave like the Fuegians, among whom it is a custom for the young and vigorous to replenish their larders from the mortal remains of their defunct elders. So far as Europe is concerned this is only too true. In Asia, we find, this method of disposal is not in fashion. There, on the contrary, an artist is appraised in proportion to his antiquity, as though he were an egg matured for the Chinese palate. Rabindranath Tagore, for example, was converted into a stone image even before he had joined the choir of heaven. Thus between dutiful cannibalism and apotheosis of the elders the spirit of modern criticism fluctuates.

It is best to study the work of this or that artist objectively; to attempt to understand his particular ethos and aroma; and, whenever possible, to determine his reaction with the pulse of existence.

Looked at thus, how does recent English literature appear? Are there any writers who can be called really great? Have we any books that might fitly be described as flawless masterpieces? Many who have thought on these matters will confess that our times have been lacking "in giants"; that our literature, instead of being "a vision and faculty Divine," is mainly characterized by "a vagabond curiosity of matter and a tormented unrest of style." We have no Tennyson, no Browning; nor novelists who approach Fielding and Dickens. True. The cause cannot be discussed here, is perhaps due to the spiritual decadence of Europe. When times are soulless, men busy themselves with appearances, and mortification of the spirit sets in. Clever books, by authors conversant with externals, may continue to be produced, but nothing that enters for ever into the reservoir of mankind's noblest aims. The modern artist has forgotten to pray; how, then, shall the gods speak to him?

But I wish to offer facts, not explanations. Let us glance at two aspects of recent English literature.

In poetry, some of the best work has been done by Miss Ruth Pitter. A few poems are really first-rate. I recommend particularly *A Trophy of Arms* (1937, pp. 16, 56, 89,

though many others are good) and *The Spirit Watches* (1939, pp. 12, 25, 42, 52). Here we have no jagged ends, no bleeding words; emotion and experience, like seed and soil, combine to produce new unities as natural as misted leaves and dewy flowers. But some inner reserve, some secret strength, perhaps, saves Miss Pitter from the the curse of finality. We always feel that the inward principle of growth is working in her. What she gives us is a dream, a vision, an apprehension woven round a chime of words. More is to come, she seems to be saying, while scattering jewels.

Mr. Herbert Read has produced some remarkable poems: his subject-matter is original and good, but the form seems to be not only experimental but often cheap. Neverthless, some of his efforts have been felicitous in the extreme. Personally, I am rather fond of *The End of a War*. It contains lines that have the odour of immortality:

> The bells of hell ring ting-a-ling
> for you but not for me—for you
> whose gentian eyes stared from the cold
> impassive alp of death. You betrayed us
> at the last hour of the last day
> playing the game to the end,
> your smile the only comment
> on the well-done deed. What mind
> have you carried over the confines?
> Your fair face was noble of its kind,
> some visionary purpose cut the lines
> clearly on that countenance.
> But you are defeated: once again
> the meek inherit the kingdom of God.
> No might can win against this wandering
> wavering grace of humble men.
> You die, in all your power and pride:
> I live, in my meekness justified.

This poem is a fine achievement, and is likely to survive Mr. Read's more ambitious work, always excepting his curiously beautiful novel, *The Green Child*.

Mr. W. J. Turner has an original mind and I think improves. He is very good when he is good; but that is not often. Sometimes it looks as though he

were guying his own genius. This is sad, because, when he is truly himself, he can make glorious whatever he touches.

Mr. Auden is freakish, but I have come across some short poems of his in magazines which I thought really fine. His *New Year Letter*, the latest child of his heart and brain, is fairly disappointing. Intellectual alertness is no substitute for magic and melody. Mr. Auden is pantingly, breathlessly contemporary ; but his vision does not penetrate the show of things into the depths where the real issues lie. It seems to me that he is not perfectly clear as to what he seeks or believes in ; words, like lichen on a stone, do not get at the root of the thoughts that seem to be tormenting him. For instance, he tells us that

> . . . true democracy begins
> With free confession of our sins.

This is cheap. Mr. Auden's meditations are not meditative. The fact is, logic without affection and the senses without coherence always fail. He understands best whose eyes are flooded with love. In any case, the finest speculations always melt into music Mr. Auden is tuneful by starts. Much of his poetry is a philosophic stutter.

Of course Yeats since Hardy has held the field and occasionally created lovely lyrics, though I believe he is over-rated for the moment, and his late work in comparison with his earlier which the young men of to-day know very little about and tend to judge as outmoded.

Mr. T. S. Eliot, until a few years ago, wrote in a kind of private dialect ; his much-discussed poem *The Waste Land* was called by Havelock Ellis (so at least he told me personally) " a true waste land, because not a single flower blooms on it." This seems to me an unnecessarily severe verdict. *The Waste Land* is not a perfect poem : indeed its cardinal fault is that it is too heavily encrusted with the tit-bits and wheezes of happier men ; but it shows a new sensibility and a new vision struggling for utterance. The importance of the poem lies not in philosophy, which is bleak, nor in its melodies, which are harsh and grating, but in the crystallization of a mood of the modern mind. However, Mr. Eliot has made great progress in recent times : *East Coker*

and *The Dry Salvages*, though not examples of divine minstrelsy, have a melancholy music all their own. Perhaps Mr. Eliot will give us one day the poem that we all expect from him—a perfect orchestration of perfect correspondences.

Mr. Ezra Pound is an accomplished craftsman, but there is not a sign of spiritual iridescence in his poetry. All we get (see the *Cantos*) is parched brilliance and scorched erudition. Rarely does he get away from mere cleverness into incantation. His Chinese poems are perhaps the best he has done.

Mr. Christopher Hassal is likely to come out with a much bigger reputation. He is reasonably " traditional "—somewhat influenced by Browning : and his poem *S. S. Ludlow* is very good indeed.

Of course there are the cryptic poets still at work—Mr. Louis MacNeice, Mr. Dylan Thomas and some others—but they are already dwindling in esteem. Mr. MacNeice's *Plant and Phantom* is, to my mind, an apotheosis of bardic sterility. Not a verse that catches fire. Not a line that glows like a ruby. Plenty of heartiness, which, somehow, rings false.

The writers who have taken the name of the *New Apocalypse* (Routledge) produces effects that can only be called catastrophic. They are obscure, not because they wish to utter vast, inexpressible truths, but because there is no light in their souls. Conscious manufacture of smoke is not a noble occupation. Reading these prophets one would think that the sun was black and spat soot into the universe.

It is a welcome change to turn to the work of Mr. C. Day Lewis. He has flashes of beauty. His *The Ecstatic* is a real bijou (see *Selected Poems* (Faber)). But often he seems weighed down by the burthen and mystery of this unintelligible world. Instead of assuming wise passivity, he teases his mind with, as it were, a needle-point. The result is poetry in which the lines, like crazy rumrunners, carry liquor that has not been properly distilled. Their contraband activity seems profitless. But now and again we are given honey-

dew and the milk of paradise. This makes us close our eyes with holy dread.

Mr. Plomer, a South African, is a satirist in verse who possesses the power of words. He can startle with an image :

> We saw, heraldic in the heat,
> A scorpion on a stone.

Excellent, we say; but he does not maintain this brilliant precision. He drops into caricature, into bluntness of tone, into a certain blindness of heart and mind. There is little of depth or delicacy in his verse. *Selected Poems* offer us, nevertheless, one or two fine character sketches, for instance, *Captain Maru.*

Mr. Frederic Prokosch is rather exceptional among modern poets in possessing *beauty of tone* : his *Death at Sea* presents some items bright as dewdrops.

Mr. Stephen Spender wears the singing-robe with conscious dignity, if not with native grace. His poetry is like stroking a cat the right way. At present the cat is mythical, but it may leap into being.

Mr. G. Rostrevor Hamilton is a whispering gallery of echoes. *The Sober War and Other Poems* remind us now of Hardy, now of Dryden, now of Hopkins ; but it looks as though these great writers have been systematically cheapened. When Mr. Rostrevor Hamilton gives up *pastiche* work to write out of his own depths he tends to become diffuse, rhetorical, and bravely empty. *Autumn, 1939*, however, is a notable exception : it is a fine poem finely fabricated.

Among the quite young, Mr. Nicholas Moore is becoming better and better, though he has not yet found himself. *The Island the Castle* and *The Wish in Season* display extraordinary facility, but no moving depths of invocation. However, there is charm in such pieces as *Who See the Coming of the Morn.*

As Professor G. Wilson Knight has written with passion and understanding of Mr. Berry,[1] I shall say nothing about him except that here we have a remarkably gifted poet.

[1] See " A New Romanticism," *The Poetry Review*, June, 1941.

Miss Lilian Bowes Lyon is a delicately sensitive artist who at times appears to be the vehicle of larger spirit than she knows. But, usually instead of heightening experience into ecstasy, she congeals it into frozen patterns. *Tomorrow is a Revealing*, with a few exceptions, is a collection of icicles.

The finest work in poetry, however, has been done by the older men—W. B. Yeats (*The Winding Stair*, 1933), Walter de la Mare (*Memory and Other Poems*, 1938), T. Sturge Moore (*The Unknown Known*, 1939), W.H. Davies (*The Birth of a Song*, 1936), and, in lesser degree, Robert Graves, Edmund Blunden and Lascelles Abercrombie.

I now wish to draw attention to a poem that is remarkable, not only for its intrinsic qualities, but because of the total neglect with which it has been treated by the critics and commentators alike. This is *The Traveller's Tale* by Clifford Bax. Here we have exquisite sensibility, narrative skill, and an enlarging vision. The melody is perfectly geared to the meaning, and the whole poem has the effect of slow music. It must be read to be appreciated. Spiritually, it is like a tropical bird in an English landscape—a strange but beautiful vision. Every anthology should contain selections from this masterpiece.

In drama Mr. Priestley and Mr. Emlyn Williams have undoubtedly shown greater potentialities than any other writers, but of course the theatre has faded away since air-attack became so fearful a menace. However, let us look back a little. Mr. Bernard Shaw stands in our path like a huge colossus. We are told that his plays are the price we have to pay for his prefaces. This seems to me a cheap witticism. Some of Mr. Shaw's plays have more humanity in them than can be found in the work of most of his detractors put together. Now there are two Shaws: the Shaw with a hard steely camera-like eye, and the Shaw who is a mystic. This is a tempting topic, but I have not the space to pursue it. Mr. Clifford Bax has given us two plays that are at once delicate and durable, uniting lacy sentiment with clarified thought. These are: *Socrates*

and *The Rose Without a Thorn*, both gracious creations, giving us a sense of the Near and Far. Mr. Aldous Huxley's *The World of Light* was good, but neither that nor any other recent play can touch *Exiles* by James Joyce which, very surprisingly, the critics never mention, though it is perhaps his most passionate production. If we except Mr. J. R. Ackerley's *Prisoners of War*, Mr. Turners's *The Man Who ate the Popomack*, and Mr. Charles Morgan's *The Flashing Stream* (which contains a truly magnificent essay on *Singleness of Mind*), there is little or nothing of importance left to record. But there has been a curiously interesting revival of poetic drama. I may mention in this connection *Murder in the Cathedral* by Mr. Eliot; *The Ascent of F6* by Messrs. Auden and Isherwood; and *Trial of a Judge* by Mr. Stephen Spender. This last, to my mind, is the most creative of the lot.

It is possible that I have omitted to mention some really important poets and playwrights; but frankly, I cannot pretend to have read everything. Perhaps I might add that no finality is to be attached to the opinions expressed here; what I have said may be taken as the explorations of one mind. My views, I know, like everyone else's, are but a measure of my own ignorance. Time is the only infallible critic.

RANJEE G. SHAHANI.

O LET US NOT DRESS UP!

THOU art creeping in to meet me: still, quiet, grey,
Even so am I to thee, my Life, my Day:
In our first waking the loads are left behind,
And we are naked, each to each. But I mind,
O Day, I closer, come with a load of my desires
To find you likewise heavy: Time-Urges on your hours.
Why should you come to me so dressed, with demand and hurrying
"I am's?"
Why I to you rigged out in aims, so many of them shams?
So begowned are we that we cannot meet
As lovers with naked hands and feet;
Then stay as thou art to me, O Day, in the young and naked dawn,
O let us not dress-up to-day: come heart to heart this morn.

VERE ARNOT.

VANISHING

THE form is less than a shadow,
Quiver of leaves o'er a stream;
Like yesterday, like to-morrow:—
A memory, a dream.

Myth is all space, not its shadow.
Day is all light, not its gleam.
Silence has nothing for sorrow,
No minor theme.

Time is to-day and to-morrow
Flowing away like a stream;
'Tis but eternity's shadow:
A memory, a dream.

G. E. MULLINS.

WHEN THE FLOWERS FADE . . . .

WHEN the flowers fade
And the sun
Beats down on one,
And the life that we made
Is lost, as a dream is lost.
It is then that I wish for the skies
To rub their eyes,
And touch with their quiet grace
Each unspoilt place,
Like a twig is touched by the frost.

Those days that were bright
And serene,
All that's been,
Like a bird in flight,
Fades as illusions fade,
And the things that we thought were the same
Have another name,
When we think of the days gladly spent
We lament
And we sleep, and remain in the shade.

DEREK B. READE.

JOHN WALLER AND THE EIGHT OXFORD POETS

A LITTLE over a year ago John Waller wrote two articles in THE POETRY REVIEW called "Oxford Poetry and Disillusionment," in which he gave brief sketches of his poet acquaintances at Oxford, who " could mostly have got firsts in schools, but preferred to get seconds and thirds and devote their time to going from one sherry party to another, writing gossip about each other . . . etc." These represented the overlap of the cynical thirties, whose gods were a previous generation of Oxford writers, Auden, Spender and MacNeice. " The intellectuals were the fastest set in Oxford." Herbert Howarth was their leader, and after him, though he does not say so, perhaps John Waller, who founded the magazine *Kingdom Come*. At this time I was, according to Waller, a similar influence on Cambridge Poetry, and in another article reviewing the Hogarth Press book of *Cambridge Poetry 1940*, he professes to see me everywhere in my contemporaries' verse. (Needless to say, none of the references are to me, nor fit me in any way. I own a pair of red pyjamas, but not queer morals, and that is the only point of resemblance !) I was naturally interested, therefore, when I saw that Routledge announced a book of *Eight Oxford Poets*, interested, but critically inclined. For I expected, after reading Waller's articles, that it would be full of the silt left over from the passage through Oxford of the Auden generation. But, now that they have passed on to the sea, it seems that Waller's generation or those he writes about have caught all the sediment, and I was surprised to find among the Eight Oxford Poets only one of those he mentioned in his articles and very little trace of Auden's influence. Indeed in the preface they specifically disavow this, saying " we are all, with the possible exception of Shaw, *Romantic* writers, though by that I mean little more than that our greatest fault is a tendency to floridity ; and that we have, on the whole, little sympathy with the Audenian school of poets." It is pleasant, for a start, to find such an honest avowal (and disavowal), and here we have the new roman-

ticism for which Cyril Connolly belatedly calls in *Horizon*, right under his nose, if he were only willing to recognize it.

Eight Oxford Poets opens with six poems from Keith Douglas, the only one mentioned in Waller's articles, of whom he writes :—" He is . . . a poet of the ivory tower, and though one may say of him that his tower is very beautiful, it is not often that he leaves it." And he is " of a retiring nature." Perhaps that means that he did not waste his talent being brilliantly drunk at parties! It is no criticism to say that a poet lives in an ivory tower. It may be eminently more suitable for writing poetry in than a bottle-party. Keith Douglas, anyway, is certainly a much more skilful and subtle craftsman than any of these other Oxford poets, and though his poems are slight, short, and unpolitical, they are pleasing to the ear and to the eye. Nor do they suffer from any tendency to floridity, as it is true some of the other poems in this volume do. In his " Famous Men " he writes,

> And now no longer sung,
> not mourning, not remembered
> more under the sun,
>
> not enough their deserved
> praise. The quick movement of dactyls
> does not compensate them.
>
> The air is advertised of seas
> they smote, from green to copper.
> These were merciful men.
>
> And think, like plates lie deep
> licked clean their skulls,
> rest beautifully, staring.

Such simplicity and elegance is not shared by any of the other contributors.

It is also stated in the preface that this book is a group production, " the result of a period of fruitful collaboration and interchange of views." And so it is fair to say that it must stand or fall as a book. And I think it stands. Some of the poetry is immature, some is florid, a little is un-

original, but on the whole all these poets have something to say, and, what is more important, are well aware how to say it. That they do not always succeed is only to be expected. The chief criticism is perhaps that they are very much a group, and that it is not easy to differentiate between one writer and another, though Keith Douglas and J. A. Shaw show distinct individuality, and Sidney Keyes and Roy Porter show great promise. Porter's long poem. "Walk to Departure", is striking indeed, but I think it fails finally because his technique was not quite up to it. His language is not quite rich enough, and his attempts to vary the pace and movement of the verse are somehow not sure enough. In two short poems "Goethe's Morning" and "In La Sua Volontade Pace," he shows himself more competent. (I quote the latter.)

> When John in Patmos saw heaven opened
> He stood in wonder by the jasper gate:
> But Galilee had made him socially unsure
> And he ran through the city kneeling to the great.
>
> Then He said "write" and the word compassed John
> Surely like a ring round the finger below.
> God said, "I come" and the sentence dried on the page,
> But the Will curved and the Word spoke "even so."

Gordon Swaine and Michael Meyer write rather conventionally, but competently: Shaw and Drummond Allison still show at least the technical influence of Auden-Day Lewis and the pylon poets. John Heath-Stubbs more than any of the others suffers from the floridity mentioned in the preface. But the book is readable, cheap, nicely produced and bodes well for the future of poetry. I think it is better than *Cambridge Poetry, 1940*, and I can safely say so, since that is a book I am supposed to have influenced.

It seems from this book that the influence of Howarth and of Waller's contemporaries has waned right away in Oxford, and I don't think a book of poetry contributed by Waller's choices would have been better than the Cambridge Poetry. It would have been much the same—which brings me to the matter of influences, and John Waller's critical method. From his articles it would appear that a

poet is recognizable by " an aristocratic air about him that leads one to suspect that he is perhaps an Austrian Archduke or a lost Hapsburg " or that he is worthy of attention because he is " charming " or " a young actor at the Oxford Playhouse." Such a discursive and chatty method may make good reading, but it scarcely affects the poetry under consideration. That he should fill half a page of a review with idle speculation about my appearance and influence strikes me as sheer waste of space. Particularly as he can come to no correct conclusion. And anyway who cares? This discursiveness, this idle chatter, is the great failing in his poetry. " I like however the sound of beautiful names and the slick feel of words " he tells us of himself. And this rather sentimental description of his taste results in a corresponding tasteless sentimentalism in his poems, *Fortunate Hamlet* (Fortune Press, 5s.) which shows at its worst in the poem " Nigel ", of which he seems inordinately fond. How much, through his editing of *Kingdom Come*, then, did he influence Oxford Poetry? It would appear on the surface that he was bound to exert a great influence, but appearances are deceptive. My influence on my contemporaries at Cambridge is quite illusory. I was no leader, as John Waller suggests. If I had any influence, it was only an influence in interesting others in poetry,—but they would have been interested in poetry anyway. In style, technique or aims I don't think any of them owe anything to me. Why should they? Some I knew, a few were friends of mine, some I hardly met. And what of John Waller? He seems to have been in the swim with the literary set of his day, but I question how many of those he mentions will subscribe to his suggested forty or fifty per cent. of post-war poetry. So far only he, Alan Rook and Keith Douglas seem to be active in the poetry world, and what of these new seven Oxford poets? I think their illusions (romantics are generally supposed to have illusions) will probably carry them further than him and his disillusioned contemporaries.

It would be unfair to end though, without a further appraisal of John Waller's own poetry. He sometimes

writes attractively and interestingly, when he overcomes his tendency to sentimentalism, and his tendency to chat. He has a not unoriginal talent, and such unconfinable enthusiasm that it is difficult to remain unsympathetic. His weaknesses are manifold, but do not altogether detract from his charm. His world of ghosts and witches in his earlier poems is attractive, but his world of young Adonises and Apollos in the second part of his book is less so, though in these he seems to have lost some of the atmosphere of public school and Oxford boyishness that keeps obtruding in the most unexpected places, references to " No talking in chapel " and similar stylized jokes, that he seems to have inherited from Auden and Gavin Ewart. Indeed his debt to Auden, and/or Ewart is very striking, though he has many different qualities too. His verse is more Elizabethan and more sensual, but the attitude he strikes, particularly in his love-poems seems very like that of Auden. Compare the latter's moral admonition " We must love one another or die," with his own " Live As for love ; carry the thunder of raging youth—Hopeful to new building ; live as for love." And in this " love " neither seem to have been successful, except in a general, wishful sense, perhaps for the same reasons. (It is interesting to note, Christopher Isherwood's " Lions and Shadows ", that Auden lived in an imaginary world of witches and faeries too, when he was young.) So in a way this book is disappointing ; it merely scratches the surface of pre-adult life at Oxford, though it does it with more naïveté and less cynical purpose than Gavin Ewart did for Cambridge, and it is mixed inextricably with a childhood of goblins. The good thing is that Mr. Waller does seem to know his limitations, and I think there is hope that he will someday write a very different and much better book. Meanwhile there are some pleasing poems here, particularly "In This Dream Kingdom" in which the problem that confounds him at the moment is stated with accuracy in clear images. His technique is good. Later perhaps he will have more wonderful things to say.

Cambridge NICHOLAS MOORE.

PERVANEH

YOUR arms, my dear, are safety's shield,
Tender the joy to lie and yield.

Aeroplanes thunder through the night
But stillness makes up our delight.

In other time, in other place
I've known in dreams this same embrace;

And what I cannot easily tell
I'll leave, because you know it well.

O war no longer matters when
Each thought can bring this joy again

And in our hearts each deep caress
Is brave beyond the last morass.

JOHN WALLER.

AN ENGLISH BALLET

I TOOK my heart, my passion to enjoy,
And reason on a laggard lead came after.
I sought for beauty, not for beauty's toy,
For joyous humour, not for pleasant laughter.
I said, with patting hands, "He dances well,
And she is charming, and the music's bright."
But there was never need to quell
The quickening breath, the heart's tumultuous flight,
Nor live unbreathing as a shaft of light,
A flowing ecstasy of moonlit white,
In rhythm rose and delicately fell,
And danced with naked soul in all men's sight;
A pause, a silence, holy, vast as night,
Then, thunderous, the rich exultant yell
Of uncontrollable delight . . .

Hungry I went, and food there was for mind.
I took my heart. 'Twas better left behind.

CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS.

POETRY AND PROPHECY

'Poetry expresses . . a new and more concrete perception of life here and now, unveiling a new dimension *of existence.'*[1]

THIS being so, we should pay full attention to the poets, who are thus seen as not only, in Shelley's phrase, the "unacknowledged legislators of the world", but as prophets whose vision alone has power to direct humanity towards the new dimension where the true laws governing life are at last understood. The fairly general neglect of poets and poetry can be explained as part of the eternal war of evil against good. Satan—a convenient term for the power of evil, whatever we may think of the concept of a "personal" devil—sees to it that good is perpetually harassed and never allowed to establish too firm a foothold, and the surest (because subtlest) forms of persecution are indifference, neglect, and of course ridicule. Poets get plenty of both. But Satan reckons without the power of goodness, which, once rooted deep in the human soul, *cannot* be torn out. The poets, no less than the martyrs and the saints, have no alternative but to echo Luther's words, "I can do no other". They may be hindered, but they can never be permanently suppressed. It would be well for humanity to turn its attention to all the great poets say, and have said since first the poetic impulse stirred in the human soul. Other self-styled "teachers" have dominated too long, and proved blind guides. High time to turn to the guides with not only long but also deep vision. So Professor Knight's new book[1] is of first importance not only to students and lovers of poetry, but also to students of life. Indeed, poetry and life are inevitably so closely interwoven that they cannot be divorced—a procedure too favoured by the purely intellectual critic. Imaginative interpretation is the only profitable approach to poetry, as, indeed, to life too.

The Starlit Dome, like all Wilson Knight's books, demands a book, not an article. The issues it raises, while interpreting the work of four great poets—Wordsworth, Coleridge,

[1] *The Starlit Dome. Studies in the Poetry of Vision* (Oxford University Press, 1941, 16s.).

Shelley and Keats—are so profound and far-reaching that the brief scope of an article cannot attempt to touch more than the fringe.

At the beginning of the essay on Wordsworth Mr. Knight remarks that

> Were it not for Wordsworth's poetry we should not trouble about his life : therefore his life as here reflected by his poetry exists in its own right (p. 2).

The life of a great poet may be of *interest* ; it is not of final *importance*. The vast importance of the poet lies in his poetry, wherein he is, mysteriously, something more than himself. Poets are instinctively aware of this, and not always pleasurably—usually the reverse :

> And while within myself I trace
> The greatness of some future race,
> Aloof with hermit-eye I scan
> The present works of present man.[1]

" Aloof ", the poet, conscious that in himself the future potentialities of mankind are foreshadowed, surveys the follies of man in his present stage of development. By no means a comfortable situation, especially as " present man " in the main seems perfectly satisfied wth his " present works " and is intolerant of the poet's ideals. The tension is acute. " All men seem mad to him ", while to all men he himself seems mad. Moreover, while aware of this disunity, he is also in the unhappy position of feeling himself a stranger from his own creative self. The deeper and richer the development of the artist, the more he is conscious that he is " used " by some higher power which flows through him independent of his mind or will. Nor can he at will make contact with this elusive self. This experience is of course shared by certain other types, who are also conscious of being used for some purpose only dimly understood by themselves.

Professor Knight's sympathetic analysis of the poetry of Wordsworth does little to remove the impression of Wordsworth as essentially a sentimentalist. Clearly, the root of his deficiencies as a poet lies precisely in the lack which

[1] Coleridge, *Ode to Tranquillity.*

Professor Knight continually remarks on, of the "romantic", in the sense of erotic, consciousness. Wordsworth was not, in this sense, a romantic. He felt romance in natural beauty, yet even this response subtly lacks the warmth, the tingling and throbbing life, of the poet whose roots are inextricably entwined with the beauties and the ardours of human love. Wordsworth is one of the best proofs of the indisputable fact that Agapé *by itself* is not enough. Which truth is abundantly proved in the lives of the saints; the greatest have always been those in whom the tide of love flowed strongly and deeply. It seems that in human life love alone is the soil from which the richest flowers can spring. Also, Wordsworth notoriously lacked humour, which accounts for the intermittent pomposity which many readers find hard to tolerate. Yet Mr. Knight calls his Wordsworth chapter "the Wordsworthian Profundity," and writes with inclusive sympathy of Wordsworth's poetry. This inclusive sympathy, fundamentally Shakespearean, is deeply characteristic of all Wilson Knight's work. Without such a sympathy, criticism or interpretation, in literature as in life, is ultimately valueless, and it is this quality, among many others, which gives to his work such a unique and vital significance.

Wordsworth's attitude to motherhood, frequently noted in this essay, is an outstanding example of his sentimentality, for parenthood, like all experience, is *in itself* valueless. The value in experience lies only and always with the individual, and in what he creates from it. Mr. Knight says: "Parenthood is always highly charged with sanctity in Wordsworth" (p. 29). One of the gifts of psycho-analysis and analytical psychology is undoubtedly the discovery that frequently parenthood is charged with anything but sanctity, and is capable of working almost irreparable harm in the lives of children. Which is also true of other family relationships.

> Wordsworth definitely says his sister's companionship saves him from a too Miltonic esteem of the "love" and "beauty" that holds "terror," the admission being very important (p. 24).

Important indeed. It is noteworthy that too often the man of genius chooses—no doubt unconsciously—the "safe" companionship of a sister or a mother, rather than dare the perilous waters of a usual love-relationship—and always to his own infinite detriment. Eros cannot be thus neglected. One might argue that Wordsworth would have been a greater, because more complete, poet without that precious sisterly companionship. Possibly the Annette-experience was the experience he should have trusted. One is certain his later marriage held no elements of creativeness or erotic fire. Mr. Knight makes clear that Wordsworth's "utterances on all final problems . . . are of noble worth" (p. 81), but that "energies are neglected rather than eternally transmuted", and "there is a failure in face of erotic powers" (pp. 81, 82). This failure is invariably due to *fear*. In many of Coleridge's poems also Mr. Knight comments that

> We are faced. . . by the tension of sexual instinct against artistic sublimation (p. 117).

Which "tension" is disastrous, for it is clear to the enlightened thinker that so long as it exists, the poet, however great in other ways, has not attained to the final wisdom wherein all such antinomies are resolved—or rather, seen to be non-existenet. The highest wisdom accepts life *in its entirety* and does not see the sexual as a "tragic necessity. . . ." where "ugliness may be at the core of love's most luscious bloom" (p. 275). Those who have attained to this wisdom have recaptured the pre-Fall consciousness, and are the precursors of a new Age of Innocence, the true Golden Age. There is nothing "subtly wrong in love", only in man's attitude to it. Again, the thought of love's "satisfaction" as "negation" (p. 295), common to so many poets and idealists, precisely explains the prolonged delay in the coming of the true kingdom of love. Perfection here and now is possible—but only for those who believe in its possibility. The final miracles of love cannot be effected in unbelieving hearts. Similarly, Jesus could work no miracle among the Galileans "because of their unbelief". Faith is the first essential. Coleridge also appears to share with Wordsworth the sentimental

view of family relationships. " Mother, child and wife are all sacred ". . . " A mother is "the holiest thing alive " (p. 110). But in the imperfect world man has made for himself, it cannot be conceded by any true realist that either motherhood, childhood or wifehood are *in themselves* sacred or holy. Until the sense of the sacred in human relationships is recovered, there can be no redemption for humanity, but the situation is hindered rather than helped by the assumption that such relationships are, under existing conditions, automatically charged with divinity. Coleridge also believes that the mother reads her children's "twilight thoughts and nascent feelings" (p. 115), whereas the truth is that usually no one is further from this understanding than the mother. No physical relationship has *in itself* any such power. It is interesting that this type of thinking, so common in Victorian and pre-Victorian days, this automatic exaltation of family relationships in general, at the same time ignores and shrinks from all suggestion of their physical bases—latterly equally wrongly over-stressed. More realistic thinking glorifies neither *as such*, while seeing in both *potentialities* for the richest living. But meanwhile, they too often remain a hindrance to the fullest integration of the self understood so profoundly by Nietzsche. In passing, one must remark how encouraging it is to find a thinker of Mr. Knight's stature understanding Nietzsche in a way he has never yet been understood.

One could easily dispense with much of Wordsworth but never with the glorious Immortality Ode, which Mr. Knight analyses exquisitely, stressing the extreme importance of the child-consciousness related to the Christian concept: " Unless ye become as little childern ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven ". Elsewhere it is suggested (pp. 120, 121) that a certain child-like (not childish) innocence is essential to any understanding of the new conception of erotic love from which the new race, "the new psychological type ", will be born. Thus, in a return to the child-consciousness, the sense of wonder and " newness " of life, the innocence born not of ignorance but of experience, lies one of the most important clues to the

ultimate redemption of man—as the great poets have aways known. And for this reason, they themselves never wholly lose that consciousness; the world of wonder is their natural world, from which they cannot finally be driven. Francis Thompson wrote of Shelley as "the enchanted child". But although Wordsworth wrote with profound wisdom and insight of the child as seer and prophet, the idea of Wordsworth *himself* as an enchanted child is palpably absurd.

All the poets considered in Professor Knight's book are concerned with "Symbolic Eternities", and the "dome" symbol, which he remarks is "at once prophecy and poetry" (p. 312) is the fundamental symbolism on which the book is based.

The long psychological analysis of *Kubla Khan* is of great interest. It is remarked that frequently the poet does not understand his own symbols, which raises deep and important issues, linking up with the earlier statement that the creative artist is never, strictly speaking, in conscious contact with his creative self.

When Professor Knight notes that

> the poem (*Kubla Khan*). . . . has a barbaric and oriental magnificence that asserts itself with a happy power and authenticity too often absent from visionary poems set within the Christian tradition (p. 97)

he touches on one of the root-failures in traditional Christianity: precisely that lack of "magnificence", vitality, and *happy* power. Hence the urgent need for a newly-vitalized *colourful* Christianity, which would include and welcome much that Christianity in the past has rejected.

Coleridge's attitude to war is important. As Mr. Knight says,

> Below a certain psychic level material revolution is utterly useless and only wins new "manacles" (p. 193).

Of this Coleridge was so poignantly aware that quite naturally, because logically—(and poets, being supreme realists, are invariably logical)—the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars seemed to him purposeless and due solely to man's criminal folly. He understood true liberty, which has really little connection with the liberty for which nations fight; the enlightened poet knows that without the deep *inner* emancipation, the genuine understanding of

the meaning of freedom, no external amelioration of conditions can avail. Usually such amelioration does merely forge "new manacles". Coleridge's prose writing, *On the Present War* is interesting to-day. However. . . "the question how to transmute human nature remains" (p. 103), no matter what the poet's reactions, but one thing is certain: it will never be transmuted by those who believe that such change is impossible, and that therefore wars will, and must, persist.

The state beyond good and evil, so often referred to in Mr. Knight's work (cp. for example pp.132 and 213 in the present book), is so superlatively high a state that, at the present stage of human development, the man of wisdom can do little more than *point directions*. And meanwhile, the poets, philosophers and mystics themselves are not, and never have been, agreed on the nature of good and evil, which problem is deeply involved with the concept of free will and Divine Omnipotence.

Shelley and Keats are poets essentially more "whole" than either Wordsworth or Coleridge, which fact emerges clearly from Mr. Knight's analysis. Shelley

> living inside the push of creation, its naked fire in his veins . . . . is properly at home only with that end—whether in time or eternity—to which existence is travailing (p. 198)

He "*is* the future, the eternal, the cosmic and spiritual whole". And while he is pre-eminently the prophet, he is also far more exquisitely the perfect poet than either Wordsworth or Coleridge. Although comparison is never a good form of criticism, here it can scarcely be avoided, for the extreme loveliness of the passage from *Prometheus Unbound* quoted on pp.207–208 soars so infinitely above and beyond anything found in the other two poets. And this is the reason, no doubt, why the essay on Shelley surpasses the others—leaving aside the other obvious reason: that the writer himself is completely at home only in that dimension "to which existence is travailing". Intimations of this dimension are recurrent throughout Mr. Knight's work, and to them all close attention should be given, as for example the passage on p. 217 concerning a "new state . . . a

new dynamic relation where fact ceases to be wholly objective". The "change of *being*" referred to occurs most commonly of course through what is called conversion, which is normally associated with some form of religious experience, though possibly it may not necessarily always be so conditioned. But whatever the cause, this change of being is so real and far-reaching that it immediately creates an individual whose outlook on all things, celestial and terrestrial, has suddenly moved so far from the usual that henceforward he *cannot* be understood by his fellow-men: he sees too far and too deep, and so must not expect contemporary understanding. Hence the persecution of all the prophets. The greatest of them all was so infinitely beyond and above the men of his time that they had to crucify him. But his death had no power to destroy his message—which is what the persecutors always forget.

Again, in the analysis of *Epipsychidion* Mr. Knight remarks that:

> We can say either that *Epipsychidion* expresses a unique experience of the poet; or, which is more valuable, aims to reveal a new dimension of normal existence, new shafts of transcendental power slanting upward from human actuality as we know it. The final union symbolically realizes an utterly time-vanquishing eternity (p.240).

He comments on the "difficulty" of this poem. Yet these difficulties can be resolved by an understanding of supra-physical creativeness, and a consideration of Plato's myth of the androgynes. There is a profound wisdom in the ancient myths, and frequently only close attention to their significance can point a way to understanding many of those difficulties instinctively resolved by the poets. Without this attention, the fairly frequent references throughout Mr. Knight's book to bi-sexuality and bi-sexual creation must prove perplexing to the general reader, who would probably be nonplussed entirely by the important passage on pp. 242-243, which concludes with perhaps the most significant sentence in the whole book:

> Shelley is injecting the fullest positive and human dynamic, *now lost*, into an age-old doctrine: which seems not at all *limited* to physical intercourse, nor to the temporal order itself, but is mainly concerned with some super-physical and eternal dimension.

Shelley's profound understanding of these truths which have become for us "mysteries" inevitably makes of him, as it makes of all who possess such understanding, "a figure of both agony and revelation" (p. 257).

In the essay on Keats, "The Priestlike Task", Professor Knight continually stresses Keats's preoccupation with the idea of sleep. The poets are nearer an understanding of this mystery than the psychologists, approaching it by their own unique method, not through scientific research. A few years ago a highly important French book appeared, which dealt exclusively with the attitude of French and German romantic poets to the mystery of dreams: "L'Âme Romantique et le Rêve". Such a book, and the statements of the poets, does more to elucidate the mysteries than all the treatises of Freud.

In this essay, Keats is recognized as pre-eminently the poet of the senses, whose love of, and hence understanding of, the physical creates a perfect wholeness, which other poets often lack. "Nor soul helps flesh more now, than flesh helps soul." Browning, too, was supremely a poet of wholeness. And this acceptance inevitably produces "a quivering sensuousness of perception . . . " "such a mind only can properly feel and project itself into another's pain" (p. 279). This is the power of imagination, the *feeling-with*, which is the root of perhaps more of the poet's agony than any other grief, the inevitable burden-bearing of the born redeemer, which far surpasses any personal pain. Powerfully redemptive, it can yet nearly destroy, and would were such individuals not at the same time possessed of an almost superhuman power of endurance. Only they "usurp this height"

> . . . . to whom the miseries of the world
> Are misery, and will not let them rest.

But they hold the key to the Kingdom of Heaven.

DALLAS KENMARE.

CHESTERTON SHOULD BE LIVING AT THIS HOUR

OFTEN we hear complaints that no poems have been written on the present war, but surely the time is not yet ripe? Perhaps Wordsworth's dictum that poetry is "emotion remembered in tranquillity" has become a trifle hackneyed, and we are apt to forget the corollary that the emotion must be remembered vividly enough to re-create the passion of the original experience. Yet though this recalled emotion must be a thing of excitement and not tranquillity, it has its roots in memory and not in present action. In one of Charles Marriott's novels a woman-poet expresses the same idea, if in less poetic language, when she says that she cannot write of an experience until it has become as much a part of her as yesterday's dinner.

This war is too much with us to allow of the mood of concentrated contemplation from which poetry springs. When its dread harvest is reaped many poems may be gleaned from those reddened fields. If we crave noble war-poetry to encourage us in these dark days we cannot do better than re-read the poems of G. K. Chesterton. I know of no martial music more inspiring than his. And it is no mere jingoism, but sings of war lit by chivalry and romance and the white flame of courage. He is never on the side of the big battalions but of the hard pressed remnant with their backs to the wall, the broken men who, in their darkest hour, through the power of the spirit wrest victory from defeat. There are few finer war-poems than *Lepanto*, that tells how Don John of Austria broke the power of the Sultan. The very rhythm is a trumpet-call

> Dim drums throbbing, in the hills half heard,
> Where only on a nameless throne a crownless prince has stirred,
> Where, risen from a doubtful seat and half attainted stall,
> The last knight in Europe takes weapons from the wall.
> . . . . . In that enormous silence, tiny and unafraid,
> Comes up along a winding road the noise of the Crusade.
> Strong gongs groaning as the guns boom far,
> Don John of Austria is going to the war.

And there is the splendid rush and exultation of the *Ballad of Gibeon:*

The war-spears were breaking, the war-horns were braying
E'er the hands of the slayers were sated with slaying,
And deep in the grasses grown gory and sodden
The Treaders of all men were trampled and trodden.
Shout thou, people, and cry like thunder,
For the kings of the earth are broken asunder.
Now we have said as the thunder says it,
Something is stronger than strength and slays it!

In these days, when England is once more beleaguered, it is heartening to read again in the *Ballad of the White Horse* how King Alfred strove to hold at bay the Norsemen who

came about our land
A Christless Chivalry.
The world turned empty where they trod,
They took the kindly cross of God
And cut it up for wood.
A sea-folk blinder than the sea
Broke all about the land,
But Alfred up against them bare,
And gripped the ground, and grasped the air,
Staggered, and tried to stand.

In the Island of Athelney there comes to him the vision of our Lady, but the only message vouchsafed is

I tell you naught for your comfort, Yea, naught for your desire,
Save that the sky grows darker yet, and the sea rises higher.

And it is with that message that the landless king goes to gather his people to the defence of England, and to that message they respond. The English have never asked their leaders to prophesy to them smooth things. Mr. Churchill showed his knowledge of their hearts when he roused them with the words—

We cannot tell how long the road will be, we only know that it will be stony, painful and uphill, and that we shall march along it to the end.

So Alfred led his slender force to the battle of Ethandune, the battle that was to seal the fate of England; and we read of that grim fight, and of how the hordes of Norsemen, after desperate conflict, broke the little band of Britons, and slew their chiefs; and of how Alfred rallied the remnant of his army

To sweat a slave to a race of slaves,

To drink up infamy?
Nay, brothers, by your leave, I think
Death is a better ale to drink,—

and led them back to victory

—And the people of the peace of God
Went roaring down to die

and carried all before them.

Napoleon of Nottinghill is a prose-poem, an allegory of patriotism, in spite of all its laughter. Adam Wayne in his defence of Nottinghill is very near in spirit to the Londoners who stood up against the " blitz " last year:

Nottinghill, ground of the common earth, on which men have built homes to live, in which they are born, fall in love, pray, marry, and die. I know of a magic wand, whatever is touched with it is never again wholly common. . . . If I touch with that wand the railways and roads of Nottinghill men will love them and be afraid of them forever: . . . . the Sword.

What a ballad Chesterton might have written of the Battle of London!

He has given us a hymn which we might well sing to-day:

From sale and profanation
Of Honour and the sword,
From sleep and from damnation
Deliver us good Lord. . . . .
In ire and exultation
Aflame with faith, and free,
Lift up a living nation,
A single sword to Thee.

Yes, if we feel a need for war-poetry just now, let us turn back to the poet who

Heard above bannerets blown the intolerant trumpets of honour,
That usher with iron laughter the coming of Christian arms.

EVA DOBELL

Arthur Row reports with deep regret the death of his friend Alfred McFarlane, the ex-newspaper boy poet, which occurred on Nov. 1st from an illness caused by war service in the last war. He had sold newspapers at the age of seven, had served in the Royal Navy and had been a London fireman in many of the most exciting fires in recent years. He published three books, "*Efforts of an Ex-newspaperboy Poet*," "*Suvla Bay*," with a foreword by Sir Ian Hamilton, and " *H.M. Ship Ealing*." The fine clean spirit of manhood which imbued not only his life work of poetry, but his own life and its struggles leaves the world he has just vacated a little poorer by his passage.

A NORTHUMBRIAN POET

THERE are two poets of Northumbria—Swinburne and Mr. Wilfrid Gibson. Swinburne came of a Northumbrian family, and lived for considerable periods of his time at Capheaton. He is said by the author of *Highways and By-ways in Northumbria*, who knew him well, to have expressed repeatedly in conversation his devotion to the Borderland ; and to have recited also many ballads, at that time unpublished and in manuscript.

Yet, despite his extraction and his habitation, Swinburne displays little of the character of the North-countryman in his verse. His professedly Border ballads read like exercises. As for himself, he may be Etonian or French or Greek or Italian in genius. But he is not a " plain blunt man." He is neither shepherd nor pitman nor potter nor pedlar. As far as we hear, he does not appear to have gone on tramp and lain in the heather. Swimming in the Channel Islands was his pastime, and his friends were the Nereids ; and he seems to have most resembled either Hugo or Apollo.

With Mr. Gibson, however, it is different. He is said to hail from Hexham, and he certainly published his first book in Kendal. This was *Erlyn the Harper* ; and Mr. Gibson began with the romantic in the archaic sense—Arthur and Guinevere, a mirror of the land of fighting-men and saints, heroes in findrinny and queens with red and floating hair.

All this, however, Mr. Gibson seems to have left behind him. He has walked about Hexham and Newcastle and Morpeth and the Border, and put down what he saw. He has by no means gone to Hexham Priory, which Saint Wilfrid builded, and shut himself in the library and reconstructed a world of scholars and dreamers. Nor has he gone up to the Roman wall, and unearthed a fort with Kipling, and seen the whole country between Chesters and Corvoran one immense camp of legionaries and race-horses and sutlers and souters.

The world which Mr. Gibson has seen and written of is the world as it is known to any one brought up in the north country. There are shepherds and sheepfolds, and pitmen and pig-iron, and lanes and celandines, and women ironing

and horse-dealers cleaning harness. It is the ordinary world we know; but in the Border country everything is very old. It is also red with the blood of legend, and smouldering with the passion of tradition.

As Wordsworth pointed out long ago, the life and speech of countryfolk are more immediately suited to the purposes of poetry than the artificial life of the towns. By the latter he no doubt means the city business-man in his top-hat and the tradesman behind his counter. Whether Mr. Gibson would quite agree as to all this, he is unquestionably the poet of the countryman; because it is of the countryman he writes. And of all our contemporary poets he is the chief inheritor of the direct tradition of Wordsworth.

Wordsworth owed his inspiration, as did Scott, to the "Percy Reliques" and to Burns, little as Burns liked ballads. Wordsworth therefore set out to draw the man he saw in the field and met on the fell—the leech-gatherer, Michael the shepherd building his sheepfold, Peter Bell the potter trudging with his ass by Swale and Nidd, the blind Highland boy and Barbara Fell. It is precisely the same people that Mr. Gibson draws, with the very names and occupations.

Mr. Gibson, has, however, followed Wordsworth's poems of actual life only, and has not elaborated a philosophy, corresponding to that of the "Excursion." Nor has he a political theory of peace and war, like that of Wordsworth's "Poems of National Independence." His own war-poems come from actuality. He steps straight from Deadwater and Bloody Syke to No Man's Land, and in the mud and mire of Flanders he is thinking of the black heather of Redesdale and the bogs where moss-troopers are buried. No poet ever made the transition from peace to war more naturally.

Under the quietude of peace, there throbs, in fact, the Border passion. Thus, in "Bloodybush Edge," we have this feeling in a somewhat grotesque form, where Daft Dick, the ne'er-do-weel, meets the burglar-tramp from the Old Kent Road under a cairn at midnight. The tramp has been affrighted by mist and silence, listens to Daft Dick's

philosophy of the reivers by pele and fell, and is finally driven off in terror by a herd of runaway stirks.

There is in Mr. Gibson pathos, humour, and, above all, a grimness caught from the primitive ballad. So "Old Skinflint":

> 'Twixt Carrowbrough Edge and Settlingstones
> See old daddy Skinflint dance in his bones,
> Old Skinflint on the gallows-tree,
> Old daddy Skinflint, the father of me.

Best perhaps are the snatches of song:

> 'Twixt Hardlee Knowe and Brocklielaw
> Runs the Hyndlee Burn,
> And there I saw a heron
> Standing in the fern;

or

> Soldier, what do you see,
> Lying so cold and still?
> Fallowfield Fell at dawn
> And the heather upon the hill.

or

> I know the singing-note of every burn
> 'Twixt here and High Cup Nick by Appleby.
> And birds and beasts, I must have them about me—
> Rabbits and hares, weasels and stoats and adders.
> Plovers and grouse, partridge and snipe and curlew,
> Red-shank and heron.

In fact, it is all in Mr. Gibson's book—the North country. The truth is, of course, it is not one man who writes poetry that is worth having. It is the voice of a region singing in him. The brambly place-names and the tangled folk-lore have been made by countless men before him, and he only collects and reproduces. Theories that the subject matter does not count are the merest twaddle. It is the lake, the moor, the fen, the stream that *is* the poetry. It would exist if the poet never came there. The poet merely imitates: his is the *mimesis* mentioned by Aristotle. But Nature persists in and for herself. Therefore it is that there is Poetry in Cumberland and Northumberland, in Dumfries and Galloway; and none elsewhere. In plain words, all by the London, Midland and Scottish; and none on the

London, Brighton and South Coast. Or so it is to me. And so it always has been to the Border singers also—Scott and Emily Brontë, and no doubt to Mr. Gibson.

But he should read the *Collected Poems*, whoever would know the whole company—Blackadder, and Red Rowan, and Daft Dick and Bell Haggard and Slim Jim and Hare-heels. They are like the stars, "a jolly company"; or, as another poet more accurately says, these are "The bonny lads of Tees and Tyne."

EDMUND CASSON.

POSTSCRIPT.—Since writing this brief criticism of Mr. Gibson, I have received his last volume, *The Alert* (Oxford University Press. 1941. 3s. 6d. net), and been asked to append a note upon it. I am now a pacificist, and, from that standpoint, Mr. Gibson's is not at all the way to write. But I have not always been a pacifist, and, from the non-pacifist attitude, Mr. Gibson's is not at all the way, either. For the militant imagination, a man should stand up like Hereward in the burning fen at Ely, or like Olaf Trygvesson when he met his death by the creek of Svold, taking blows and rendering, and through all exultant. That stern joy the warrior felt; and the bills and axes, if we may believe the sage, also sang. But here, in Mr. Gibson's book, we have mingled pain, distress, shame, pity, sorrow and heroism. Perhaps I liked best "The Listening-Post," where on the Border fells the watchman renews the emotions of the Roman sentry, and the stars from timeless deeps look down. It is no part of a critic's duty to write a poet's work for him; otherwise I should have said that he should have set the stars also above him embattled in ruin. Next or perhaps more, I liked "The Mountain." And here I thought the poet should have made the pilot die in a trance of serenity and forget war. In fact, I thought he was going to do so. But that would have been a pacifist's poem. But to clinch the matter—in a word, very very far away, infinitely remotely but still suggesting, Mr. Gibson reminds me of the one great poet of battle, Aeschylus, who in the bulk of his work stands up, a soldier and nothing more, and makes his characters, Orestes, Clytemnestra, Eteocles, strike blow on blow one against another, as though ranked at Marathon. But there is no joy in Aeschylus, only horror. I can say no better and no worse of Mr. Gibson. I have added this note with extreme reluctance, and only by constraint.—T.E.C.

DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN POETRY: XCI

I find it true that Kate Rennie Archer is a delightful interpreter of Scotch poetry. She is the author of two books of poetry and many articles published in the *New York Times*, *Edinburgh Dispatch*, *Glasgow News* and *Express*. Mrs. Archer has travelled extensively in all European countries and America, and during the war she was recognized for services, and as an associate of Mrs. Pankhurst during the Suffrage Movement she acted as a pioneer woman in two lines of business, handling American products in Europe.

Let us read the first stanza from the poem which entitles her new volume: *Call Frae The Heather*:

There's a sweet saft scent, like heather
On a muir abune a haugh;
There's a simmer mist that touches like a kiss upon my face;
There's a soun' o' water lappin'
At the edges o' a loch,
An' a green smell of dark fir-trees in a weel lo'ed heilan' place.
And my heirt stan's still. . . . it listens for a step it used tae ken,
For the feet o' ane that's sleepin' very quately in a glen.

Charming song is, "I Lo'e a Lad."—

I lo'e a lad wha lo'es na me,
An' oh, I canna hae him,
For though he's stown ma heirt this day
I daurna let on tae him.

By nicht ma pillow's wat wi' tears,
By day I daunder dreamin',
I'm fu' o' useless signs an' fears,
An' fulish thochts an' schemin'.

A good picture of a Scot abroad follows:

He carries the torch across the plains,
Through arid deserts, and drenching rains,
He threads the jungle and treads the sands
Of burning beaches, and barren lands.
But where he goes goes the tartan plaid,
And Auld Lang Syne, and The White Cockade,
Sweet Annie Laurie, and Bonnie Doon,
The kind Scots tongue, and the piper's tune.

Mrs. Archer writes me: "An inspired poet is the highest human good. Men die with a song on their lips, women endure with a refrain of words in their hearts, glory, love and death are all vocal through poetry. Fine prose may live, but only if it is so lyrical as to be true poetry. Be the day weary, be the day long, at length it cometh evensong . . . so have long days been comforted, in hospitals, on battlefields, in hard days at home or office . . . and in the great emergencies of living the compact inspired sentence of some singing poem

has been the cup of water on the dreary road. One cannot remember the irregular lines of free verse so well . . . therefore for me the more regular rhythms. Times change, however, and these tried forms may vanish, though I doubt it. I believe that this is America's Singing Hour. May all the songs come from the heart and find the heart."

ALICE HUNT BARTLETT

[We regret additional contributions in this series from Mrs. Bartlett have been lost in transit.—ED.]

A REVIEW OF REVIEWS

May I present a review of your reviews? Such contemplation and effort is a tribute to the arresting material in your September-October issue.

It was splendid of Mr. Stephenson to attempt to simplify, for the readers, T. S. Eliot. I was particularly interested in his phrases "minute, careful collection of images," "texture of reality," "dignified concrete images," etc. Through them, I realized that we agree that poetry is basically a series of concrete images with endless connotations in the timeless. "Poetry passes through the definite and orderly into the vague," says Phosphor Mallam. But let us apply these phrases to the lines quoted in furtherance or in proof of Mr. Stephenson's premise. "Time present and time past, etc." Is this line in any sense of definable words "concrete"? And, furthermore, do they as a whole present images? To me it is the vague trying, yet failing, to get into the orderly. Are they not, in "reality," rather a sketchy statement relative to the full gamut of time—inclusive of the platitudinous "now"? In fact, the prose phrase "cumulative force of the past," used later in this letter, in my opinion, has the same essence with much more economy and lucidity. The "passage" referred to is a bit murky; for, are we not all the victims of too many *obscure* "passages" never taken,—poet, street cleaner, banker? A "door" and a "rose garden"! Are these definite images? To whom? If so, I am afraid that he will be forced to make them concrete by explaining: Is the door iron, wood, or mystery? Necessity of personalized explanations, however, seems to be the death of poetic connotation.

> "There they were dignified, invisible"....
>
> "Go, go, go, said the bird; human kind
> Cannot bear very much reality."

I might "go" with the philosophical premise that human kind, due to mental limitations, can never know "reality." But Mr. Stephenson's article was not a dissertation on philosophy but on poetry; therefore, instead, I searched for the "dignified minute concrete images." Every aspect of the first line seems in direct opposition to the explanatory words involved. Furthermore, isn't

the image, in the second group of lines, but slightly removed from the "pink elephant" stage of the chronic alcoholic? Or is it mere "bizarre coquetry"? Isn't the whole unreal "reality" when tested by definition, intuition, through the senses or through that vision developed from the abstract reasoning power that begins with "I think"?

We are asked to equal Eliot's profound attempt to *explain* "the present." I refuse the challenge, not because Eliot, in my opinion, accomplished the end, but merely because I would prefer to illustrate the elusive word "nothing," knowing full well, from its natural connotations, the impossibility of the task. All of this represents a nice problem in hair-splitting, neo-philosophical prose dialectics. But is poetry a vehicle of "explanation"? Mallam says, "Prose reduces the vague to the definite and orderly and stays there." That is what "explanation" always attempts to do. And wherein lies the "imagery"? "At that still point where the dance is"? What dance? Am I too blunt? All is interplay—a changing, a moving, a flowing, a becoming. Is there ever observed, actually or imaginatively, a status of the dance similar to this situation? In other words, can it be "imagery" in that it can be imagined? If so, what keenness of vision! If not, what wholesale rot!

"The moment in the garden when the rain beat, The moment in the draughty church." Good! We also have our "points of memory," but these are dignified, minute, concrete (particular) images connoting through their timelessness the cosmic or climactic arrested moment "for all people, always"? I doubt it; to me, they are mere intravertic, squeezed-dry obscurities and generalities.

And Mr. Rook's commendable "reconciliation": He agrees to the "old and valued" and then requests a "sympathetic hearing" for the "new." The latter statement is factual, in that all of this "much ado" is merely a "hearing," for only time will judge as to the ultimate "facts." I disagree, nevertheless, that the "world of tomorrow —will not be built on the past." The past is staring us in the face; what can we do about it? The cumulative push of time is ever present. The leopard cannot change its spots, nor can the donkey whinny. We are what we are because we were what we were; nor can we cancel out a jot of it. If we could, would we? Shakespeare? Plato? Dante? Heredity must superinduce past environment and weaknesses —and strengths—and reimpose them on the living. We may hope, however, that this persistent, cumulative force of the past, driving us through an obvious cyclical plan, may present a clearer realization and a more profound expression that will more delicately adjust this complex-ridden, suicidal state. But are poets sociological workers, chroniclers, and reformers? Or are they, let come what may, merely observers and delineators of the true and beautiful? Ultimately and inevitably, when our angle of human error, rising too sharply and rapidly, collapses, this Western civilization will clatter back to dust.

This is historically factual: All civilizations have. And it is probably as proper as age and death of man. Fight against it if you will, and what have you?

Subsequent civilizations are discerning; note how selective they have been in the perpetuation of the creative arts. As we learned from the Greeks and the Romans, some day civilization will learn from us and that slight thread of our entity will be contained in the few lines of a few artists and thinkers. "The rest is silence." . . .

Mr. Rook speaks of "progress." The word means a "movement forward or upward" but connotes a movement to superiority. I question the word as a liar and a cheat. Man is; his full powers are; nothing aids him but his ego: Plato waits for us 10,000 years hence, Shakespeare's mind is "beating the bush" as a pioneer ahead of the next thousand generations! The world of men is ever present—everywhere; each human manifests every emotion ever manifested anywhere at any time. And that is where so many poets err. Blake knew:

> "To see a world in a grain of sand,
> And heaven in a wild flower:
> Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
> And eternity in an hour."

We can merely hope, therefore, that conditions will arise to bring about a full activation of the ever-present human power: this life may be a bit more beautiful, age a bit more mellow, and the soul just a bit more tranquil.

Despite all of this, no one should deny the right of "exploration and experimentation"; it may be the springs of activation. But we do deny the right of such "experimentation" becoming dogma and thus usurping the field of creation. To-day we seem to be in reverse. Normally, youth is the poetic period, probably because of its fluidity of viewpoint—its mental plasticity, so well understood by both Wordsworth and Plato. The creative mood is and must be the veriest antithesis of dogma or "schools." So I say to your young men, "Young poet beware! Your entire talent lies in a gentle skepticism of the 'material,' the 'real,' the 'factual'; hold fast to the idealized indicated in the probable abstract. And then—only then, may mankind rise to his fullest stature." This weak diagnosis of our troubles, therefore, lies in our ineffectual mental separation of the "geometric" truths from the relative error of the senses. I appreciate, nevertheless, that a tank bearing down on an unarmed soldier is, for all practical purposes, "real"; hence, it is a bit difficult during the echo of exploding bombs and the rasping of death-dealing metals to speak of this only "reality"—the abstract mental concept, as against the gutter—or squeezed-dry "realism." All "materialists," however, are belly-philosophers, and belly-philosophies are, after all, only belly-deep.

(Continued on page 67)

THE POETS' FELLOWSHIP :

THE PREMIUM EDITOR'S REPORT

There are three outstanding poems in this competition, and each is worthy of our award. To these I add the various lyrics contributed by MARGUERITE EDGELOW, which attain a high level as a whole.

It must be admitted that D. E. CHRISTINE TOMLIN's beautiful lyric " Man Overboard " tempted the Editor to make this the sole award. It would not have been right, none the less, to omit FRANCES PRITCHARD's imaginative and spiritual excursion in " The Poet," nor can the remarkable development of VERE ARNOT's work be passed by. This writer is certainly gaining confidence and sureness of touch.

Our awards are therefore to : D. E. CHRISTINE TOMLIN (Harrogate), FRANCES PRITCHARD (Bournemouth), VERE ARNOT (Walton-on-Thames), MARGUERITE EDGELOW (Aylesford).

HIGHLY COMMENDED.

Irene Chapman Benson, Winnipeg ;
Dorothy Birch, Bournemouth ;
T. E. Casson, Ulverston ;
A. H. Cordwell, Worthing ;
Geoffrey Dobbs, Bristol ;
Pauline Emeric, Taplow ;
Susanne Knowles, London, W. ;
Irene H. Lewis, Leatherhead ;
Eva Metzger, Putney ;
I. M. Mills, Ware ;
Nancy Pollok, Rutherglen ;
Brenda F. Skene, Lustleigh ;
Annie Balcomb Wheeler, Salem, U.S.A. ;
Charles Woodhouse, Haslemere.

COMMENDED.

Harry Bates, West Bromwich ;
O. J. Beard, Manchester ;
M. D. C., Kirkhill ;
D. R. W. Carr, Ferryhill ;
Henry Clayton, Water Orton ;
Ellodë Collins, Bournemouth ;
Christabel K. Cooper, Stockport ;
Michael Figgis, Felixstowe ;
Evelyn M. Finn, Honiton ;
Mary Frere, Northwood ;
Adrienne Gale, Seascale ;
Dulcie Eden Greville, Wakefield ;
A. W. Harding, Twickenham ;
Christine Henderson, Montreal ;
Elizabeth Kentish, Westerham ;
Joseph Leslie, Blackpool ;
Evelyn Lloyd, Cheltenham ;
Joyce M. Lloyd, Hassocks ;
R. McKie, Brighton ;
Florence E. J. Mitchell, Chicago ;
Edith Franklin Parker, Wootton Bassett ;
Juanita Peirse, Bath ;
E. Curt Peters, Evesham ;
T. Pittaway, Frome ;
D. B. Reede, Sierra Leone Regt. ;
Charles Rice, Rotherham ;
Joyce Rowe, London, N.W. ;
Anthony G. Sayse, Hereford ;
E. Seton, London, S.E. ;
Roberta Shuttleworth, Guildford ;
Bertha Skeat, Sedbergh ;
Arthur Lynnford-Smith, Wanstead;
D. M. Sonzen, Hornchurch ;
Mabel Meadows Staats, Pa., U.S.A.

The usual premium offer for the best poem or poems submitted to the Premium Editor during the month (without limitation of subject) is continued. Not more than four lyrics or one long poem should be submitted. MSS. should reach " The Premium Editor,

THE POETRY REVIEW, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1," by February 1st, accompanied by stamped addressed envelope, and if criticism is desired, 2s. 6d. (For a more detailed postal criticism, 5s. should be sent.) It is essential that entrants to this competition be members of The Poetry Society or registered subscribers to THE POETRY REVIEW, and that each poem bears the name and address of the author.

CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS replies in " We Live Again " to " the doleful " None Wake You " of Phyllis Lyth in the November POETRY REVIEW :

Dearest of all my friends, I know
There's no goodbye.
Death is a cheat, a hallowed lie
Which, even as you fell
Died with the soul's abandoned shell.

We live again, in joy and woe,
And take new birth
In semblance newly wrought of earth.
Then, heaven-purified
March on. Only the garments died.

We live again, and tread below
The olden Road.
And you and I that gaily trod
Unwearied hand in hand
Will meet again. All that we planned

So splendidly so long to do,
All will be done.
But now, rest. The journey's scarce begun.
Dear heart, where love is, death is vain
For this I know—we live again.

L. M. Miller (Bangor) replies to the criticism in " Song of Life " (November POETRY REVIEW) of the poets whom Mr. Christmas Humphreys thinks " In Love with Death " :

How shall we sing of life, and death ignore
Whose advent is the opening of a door
Into a Life more rich and vital far
Than this we know ?—though still our spirits cling
To those old loves, whose passing can but bring
Our hearts more nearly where our treasures are.

How fortunate if life could satisfy
The soul's unanswered questions, and supply

Intransient joys as anodynes for strife !
To-day is one with all the yesterdays,
To-morrow blinds them in mysterious ways,
For Death is but another name for Life.

DOROTHY TRAIL (Vancouver, B.C.) joins a recent discussion in these lines

TO THE RHYMESTERS :

We are the poets and we laugh at you :
You who gloom in the philosophical dust of the graveyards,
you who wrap hidden purposes in ponderous jargon,
you who toss off dainty thoughts in compact rhymes.
One sunset on an azure sea—
Now what will rhyme—ah ! Memory.
Your purple dusk, your golden grain.
There you've a poem once again.

Well, you can keep it and the dollar that it brought.

We see—magic !
Steel fingers tighten our throats,
we feel—we feel—we stretch our hands into the silken air,
we laugh in wine-pulsed grandeur,
we weep bitterly.

You have words on a bit of paper ; we have nothing.
you think you are gods ; we know we are !

J.E.M. (PANGBOURNE) discusses A. E. HOUSMAN'S DEVELOPMENT OF THE EPIGRAM : The epigram, on a superficial examination, would seem to be perhaps of all forms of poetry the least dramatic, but one type of epigram, at least, appears to me to depend for its interest, as drama does, on situation and contrast. In the " Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries " the whole effect is accomplished by contrasting the magnitude of what was in balance with the petty fact that it was saved for pay. Housman has grasped two salient and contrasting facts involved and shown them up against each other clearly and surely, just as a playwright grasps the dramatic possibilities of a plot, contrasting character with character and circumstance with circumstance. Thus the epigram, which is usually accounted a form of poetry demanding restraint above all things, in actual fact, can be used to commemorate an event as dramatically as it is possible to describe it, and nothing must be included which is not dramatically relevant.

But Housman has done more than imitate the Classical epigram. Some of his writing seems to me to contain a sophistication not to be found in the Greek, to develop what the Greeks began. There are ancient epigrams upon nature, but between them and the epitaph-class

there tends to be a complete cleavage. The nature epigram is a straightforward description of such subjects as children playing with a goat or the pleasure of hearing a country flute while drowsy under a tree—not in the least terse or intense in style. Housman uses natural objects so that they are dramatically relevant. In Last Poems XXII, for instance, the sloe in flower is brought in to suggest pleasantness and beauty, the thorns and winds and fir to suggest hurt and cold. He thus combines the terse intensity of the ancient epigram with the charm of apt nature-description, so that he writes on occasions what might almost be called an epigrammatic lyric and this type of lyric is an original contribution to English Verse.

A Limited Review

An afternoon's reading of the 1941 volume of *Columbia Poetry* (O.U.P., 6s. 6d.) gives these impressions : firstly virility, then a collation of tenderness and harshness, a streak of morbidity here and one of romanticism there, new images and no-forms, a re-flowering of old themes in old forms, landscapes as wide as those of life, weathers as extreme as passions, and, above all—the healthy symptom of virility.

Deep Moving Waters, poems by A. Safroni-Middleton (The World Wide Press, 10s. 6d.) have a rollicking sea-sense strangely tempered with fragments of outworn poeticisms. The verses often move with a Byron-like felicity from the sublime to the colloquial; they can swing from :

> God's sorrow frets the ocean, all the seas,
> Compassionate, are moving round His Knees. . . .

to Old Jan, who died of the best rum and sprees. . . .

and there is the haunted pathos of " The Ancient Mariner " in the tale of the slave girl dying in a drifting boat and of the ship's dog washed overboard in a heavy sea. The lyrical poems are more ordinary.

Miss Maud Bodkin has brought her very considerable scholarship to bear on *The Quest of Salvation in an Ancient and Modern Play* (O.U.P., 2s. 6d.). She sees in *The Family Reunion* of T. S. Eliot the prototype of *The Eumenides* of Aeschylus and shows how similar are the Furies of the old ethics to what we look upon as subconscious compulsions to-day. It is a short but profound study, and the concluding paragraph of Appendix I excellently summarizes her careful analysis and clear understanding of both plays :

" In the story of Eliot's play, as in that of Aeschylus, there is a curse binding a later generation's fate to an earlier. Harry's evil relation to his wife, issuing in so strong a wish to be free of her that he feels himself guilty of her death, renews the evil of the death-wish entertained by his father against the woman who had dominated the life of both her husband and her son. The psychological development of the story in Eliot's play guides us towards an interpretation bringing the ancient idea of the curse into line with the modern thought of a compulsion, imposed by the relation of the parents, to repeat a form of

action at variance with the rational purposes of the individual. According to this interpretation, in each play the Furies embody the energy of passion fixed in an evil relationship or custom—the same energy which, released from the fixation and redirected, becomes the sustaining force of a better order of individual and social life."

Walter de la Mare's new rhyme pie, *Bells and Grass* (Faber and Faber, 7s. 6d.) has the same mixture of whimsicality, fun and seriousness and the same joyous illustrator, F. R. Emett, as the old one. Their joint magic is as potent as ever, in fact even more so, and this says much when one remembers how strongly old affections are apt to weight the balance of judgment. I think "Grace" catches my fancy most; its first verse runs:

For every sip the Hen says grace;
The Rabbit twinkles his small face;
Ev'n to the Fox, stol'n safely home,
A crafty grin of thanks must come;
Even the Spider, plump in net,
His manners cannot quite forget,
And when he's supped upon a fly
Puts what is over neatly by.
Oh, *any* one with tongue and wits
Who crowded up with victuals sits
Through breakfasts, luncheons, dinners, teas,
With never a *Thank you* or a *Please*,
Eating not what he should but can,
Can *not* be a well-mannered man.

Blitz Bits, verses by Donald Hughes (Arrowsmith, 1s. 6d.) are found to be more slight in appearance than upon closer acquaintance and are most telling where most epigrammatic, "The Tragedy of Petain" being perhaps the most pointed:

Veni, Vedi, Vichy (fatal word)
I came, I saw—and I, alas, concurred,

while "Friendship" shows the author in more sympathetic mood:

Herein indeed is hope—
That Britain through distress
Welcomes her new-found scope
For spreading friendliness.

Facing a common danger
Has had one happy end—
To turn the perfect stranger
Into a perfect friend.

E. D. BANGAY.

I should like to express my appreciation of L. M. Miller's beautiful little poem "Farewell" in the Sept.-Oct. POETRY REVIEW.

It is like a picture which embodies desolation, emptiness, hope, in

a few lines. The "red sky," "the silver silence," and the three exquisite last lines seem to include in a lovely symbolism Meeting and Parting—that Meeting and Parting of which George Macdonald wrote: "For only in the agony of parting do we look into the depths of love." "Farewell" beautifully expresses all that is meant in that quotation and quite vouches the heart.

Bedford. IRENE H. LEWIS.

MISS ROBERTA SHUTTLEWORTH, in awarding on December 13th the Junior Silver Challenge Cup, to VALERIE ENGLEBACK for her finely sustained concentrated rhythmical renderings, said that the candidate, whose own selection was "Crossing the Bar," had rendered it in too sad a tone, having missed the note of joy that it contains, a note which runs through all poetry, no matter how sad the theme. It has occurred to me, comments Miss Vaughan Jenkins, that the above criticism would form the base of an interesting discussion so—in the hope that other readers of THE POETRY REVIEW will follow on—I suggest, firstly, that of all our agreeable sensations contentment is the most placid and passive, joy the most exuberant and demonstrative. Happiness, pleasure, delight, need only smiles, laughter, often no more than a sunny countenance, to give them expression, whereas a great joy, sacred or profane, thrills the whole being, and from time immemorial, has impelled man to let off steam through shout, or song, or dance. Even the exhilaration of a lesser joy seeks a safety-valve in flag-waving, cap-tossing, embraces, handshakes, and the like. So potent, indeed, is its electrifying effect, that people have died from a too sudden joy. Thus considered, the word used as a generality is a hyperbole; but as transmuted by Keats to signify the acme of, because perpetual, delight, it becomes a jewel instead of being an indeterminate link uniting a congeries of all manner of poems. And secondly, for a young traveller who has passed but eleven milestones on this world's highway since she "drew from out the boundless deep" to choose *Crossing the Bar* for an audition test was a brave venture, which seems to indicate a thoughtful individuality. Although great is our indebtedness to those who strive patiently both to train our intelligence to grasp the poet's meaning and to implant the principles of technique whereby we may present it effectively to others, only the lessons taught by life in the school of experience can develop that intuitive insight on which depends how far sympathetic understanding will vitalize our intellectual perception. No artist can finish a painting whilst one necessary pigment is lacking, and so it was for years with my visualization of *Crossing the Bar*, because I could not find a word to fit its atmosphere as I dimly felt it. At last, some allusion to serenity reminding me of two aged friends of my girlhood, whose eventide had been beautiful owing to this very quality, I was satisfied that in serenity I had found the desired keyword, and with all respect to Miss Shuttleworth I stick to that opinion. Surely the soul's hope must be fulfilled before spiritual Joy takes its place.

(Continued from p. 60)

But Mr. Waller defeated me entirely by stating that Auden is Byronic, —Byron, the swashbuckling egoist, careless of reputation, life, and art, verbose, wasteful of life's energies and the reader's patience, and with all, through his genius, sweeping the " lay " reader off his feet to attain an overnight " popularity " never before or since enjoyed by an English poet of importance. It is hard to believe that Mr. Waller meant what he actually said, for it seems to be a comparison as absurd as would be a comparison of Auden's pent-up obscurities to Byron's sounding, " mob-aimed," almost too-clear delineations.

If these speculations relative to Byron be wrong, the waste basket is the proper container for these pages.

Some times I wonder if the " modernist " is not trying to construct a body without flesh or, perhaps, without bone. Certainly, their resultant is bloodless and soulless and cold.

Great poetry creates a subjective emotional experience in both the conceiver and the appreciator. Is it possible then for it to make one follow through the intricacies of an abstract process of philosophical thought ? If so, Kant's *Pure Reason* is a vastly greater poem than is *Paradise Lost*.

San Raphael, Calif, Oct. 29 CULLEN JONES.

A ROYAL ACADEMY OF POETRY

I should like to express my whole-hearted agreement wth the fine suggestion of your correspondent P. E. Leaver in the September-October issue of the Poetry Review for the establishment of a Royal Academy of Poetry with the Poet Laureate as Life-President. The publication also of the proposed annual book of selected verse chosen by a Committee representative of the best elements in poetry I consider a proposal of very great value to the cause of the unknown poet, and would centralize the attention of the general public on our noble and necessary calling.

I would like to put forward that there could be 40 R.A.s and an appropriate number of A.R.A.s, after the manner of Burlington House.

The history of our poetic literature, rife with patriotism from Shakespeare to Rudyard Kipling and Rupert Brooke, demands its accomplishment here and now when this national heritage stands in danger.

This is The Poetry Society's finest hour. Let it take this magnificent step and fulfil the life-work of Dr. Johnson, for before the presence of this great Academy of Verse the people of England will awaken at last from their mental lethargy and their clouded vision and will realize that the trumpet voice of the soul (as that of patriotism) is spoken noblest and best through the priceless medium and the golden message of poetry.

ARTHUR ROW.

Clifford, Hereford. Nov. 3rd, 1941. (Vice-President, P.S.Inc.)

TRADITION, ART AND ENGLAND'S GENIUS.
(POETRY REVIEW, NOV.-DEC.)

I would like to support Mr. Walter Burton in his interesting article from *Paradise Regained*, Book IV, by a Milton quotation—extremely apt to the first two paragraphs :—

" Or, if I would delight my private hours
With music or with poem, where so soon
As in our native language, can I find
That solace ? All our law and story strewed
With hymns, our psalms with artful terms inscribed,
Our Hebrew songs and harps, in Babylon
That pleased so well our victor's ear, declare
That rather Greece, from us these arts derived,
Ill imitated, while they loudest sing
The vices of their deities, and their own,
In fable, hymn, or song, so personating
Their gods ridiculous, and themselves past shame."

Dec. 4, 1941. H. L. SENIOR.

* * * * *

The format, the type, printing and paper of *The Solitary Man* (Dent, 7s. 6d.) are more " precious " than the contents, for in this most significant and important volume of poems Mr. Richard Church relates in a variety of ways and aspects the conflict of every sensitive soul with the external world intensified by present circumstances.

Humbled by the large events
Of war and all its needs,
I put away private intents
And personal greeds.
I button on the discipline,
My nation-coloured coat,
And take my station in the line :
Lost and remote.

With an artistic simplicity rarely achieved in these days the poet blends the metaphysical with the realistic without disturbance of harmony. He takes a side street into yesterday and reveals the illusory tread of the years without ignoring or fearing our austere neighbour, Death. He may discern anger in the lines of mirth but is not diverted from the purposes of living, only saddened, by the ghastly play of those who fill their little intervals by counterfeiting Mars. Even dreams lose their futility, the thrush is more sane than deluded, and a diffusion of honeysuckle is sweeter and more profound than exotic perfumes and erotic desires. Much more can be read into these delicate, finely wrought poems, in which the many variegated quotable lines are woven into a delicate tapestry of sound and sense and feeling and imagery, unsurpassed in contemporary poetry.